

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Military Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters in Arlington, Virginia January 29, 1997

The President. Let me say, first of all, I'm delighted to have a chance to be back at the Pentagon to meet with our commanders-in-chief. This is the first meeting for Secretary Cohen and our new national security team. We're all looking forward to it.

America is very proud of our men and women in uniform, and they have maintained an extraordinary tempo of operations for the last several years, being deployed in many different places for long periods of time. And the leadership and planning that has gone into these operations are a tribute to the people around this table and to others in our Armed Forces. And I'm looking forward to discussing what we're going to do in the next year and having this meeting.

War Crimes in Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, do you think that U.S. troops could play a role in trying to arrest some of the accused war criminals that are out and about in Bosnia at the moment?

The President. I think that the agreement that was struck at Dayton and signed in the Paris Peace Treaty says what our military believes is responsible, that if we're going to go there and do the UNPROFOR mission, it would be impossible to do that and spend your time taking affirmative action over—as a police force, in effect, international police force—but that if they come in contact with people who are wanted and where there is, in effect, a warrant out for them, they ought to apprehend them. But I think it would be very difficult for them to do the mission, particularly with a smaller number of people, and in effect spend full-time doing that.

It's always—I think at Dayton—everyone knew from Dayton on that this was one of the most difficult things, that they couldn't walk away from this evidence of war crimes and that

there needed to be some way of proceeding, but that there was no way that you could effectively do the job of UNPROFOR, which was the most important thing to try to stabilize the country and the borders, and in effect make that the primary mission.

Maybe I ought to let General Joulwan answer that question, but I think that's the right answer.

Gen. George A. Joulwan. Yes, Mr. President. [Laughter]

Q. Do you oppose the international group that's been proposed?

The President. Well, what I want to look—I have asked—at the University of Connecticut, when I spoke at the—Senator Dodd not very long ago—I said I thought we ought to consider whether there should be a permanent international war crimes tribunal, which of course would require some sort of way of carrying out its mandate. But that—if we do that, we need to look at it not just in terms of Bosnia but over the long run.

We need to recognize that we can't expect people who are sent into a very volatile situation and ask us to stabilize borders, to ensure the security of cross-border crossings, and all the other things that UNPROFOR has had to do, you can't expect those same people to do this other work unless they literally come in contact with those who should be arrested and returned. So there would have to be a completely different way of dealing with it if we're going to have a permanent war crimes tribunal, which I think has a lot of merit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Army Conference Room at the Pentagon. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. George A. Joulwan, USA, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Microenterprise Development January 30, 1997

Thank you. Welcome to the White House. I would like to begin with a word of thanks to, first, Secretary Rubin, who became Treasury Secretary and, before that, head of the National Economic Council, with a passion rare for someone in his previous line of work—[laughter]—rare, to bring the benefits of enterprise to people who had been too long denied them, and an absolute conviction, too rare all across our country, that just because people were poor and in distress did not mean they could not do better, did not mean that we could not spread the benefits of enterprise to the cities and to the isolated rural areas where they had been too long absent.

I'd also like to thank the First Lady for beginning this obsession, almost, that we have with microenterprise with me. I guess—I asked her before I came up here, and we were laughing—you know, one of the great burdens of growing older is that you can't remember when something happened even if you remember exactly what happened. [Laughter] And I said, "Now, when was it that I came home and told you, 'I hope I live long enough to see Muhammad Yunus win a Nobel Prize?'"—[laughter]—because it was my first exposure, through our friends in Chicago who brought me in touch with him, to the whole idea that microenterprise might be exploded across a nation. And she said, "I think it was '85, but it might have been '86." So to be literally accurate, more than 10 years ago—[laughter]—we started the long road which we could not have predicted would bring us all to this day.

These awards for excellence in microenterprise development simply recognize that our country has been and will be built on the enterprise of our people, on their ideas, their energies, their willingness to take risks, their willingness to pursue their dreams. That is the story of all the new businesses in this country. And with the right opportunity, those kinds of dreams can become real for countless numbers of people to support their families and strengthen their communities and build our country into the kind of nation we want in a new century.

Indeed, it is now a commonplace observance that often the greatest contributions, economic contributions, in our communities come from the smallest businesses in the aggregate. They literally can transform communities, offering a path to success for Americans who would otherwise not have had it.

If we can spread the opportunity for microenterprise, for making that first beginning across this country, we can offer a new path to success for Americans who today are left out of the economic mainstream. In rural America it may be a person who once worked on a family farm. In urban areas it may be a parent who can't juggle an office or a plant job with a family or who's been left out of the work force for childrearing or who is struggling to move from welfare to work. It might be older Americans who are retired from their previous jobs. It might be people with disabilities who aren't mobile but who have a skill, an idea, a capacity to contribute. It might be laid off workers looking for a second chance.

There are huge numbers of people in our country, as all of you know, who are literally brimming with initiative and desire, who are willing to be responsible and work hard. Microenterprise helps to put such people on their feet and gives people with courage and genius a chance to reach for the stars. To do that, they must have opportunity. There are people often who need these opportunities who are completely unable to get proper business training or loans or even a hearing from a lender under the established systems. But when the opportunity is not there for them, make no mistake about it, their loss is also our loss. For every person whose potential goes unfulfilled, there is a problem or the absence of an opportunity that affects the entire Nation.

And when they have an opportunity, we move closer together in our common goals for our society, for after all, all of us want every American to be able to be responsible and to work and to find fulfillment. We want to raise the incomes of people who can be fully participating in our society. We want to promote the growth of business. We want to ensure that everybody